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Outline of The U.S. Legal System

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/legalotln/>

Introduction to the U.S. Legal System
Chapter 1: History and Organization of the Federal Judicial System
Chapter 2: History and Organization of State Judicial Systems
Chapter 3: Jurisdiction and Policy-Making Boundaries
Chapter 4: Lawyers, Litigants, and Interest Groups in the Judicial Process
Chapter 5: The Criminal Court Process
Chapter 6: The Civil Court Process
Chapter 7: Federal Judges
Chapter 8: Implementation and Impact of Judicial Policies
The Constitution of the United States and Its Amendments
Glossary
Bibliography

Links to U.S. Response to Tsunami and Earthquake in Asia

U.S. Response to Tsunami and Earthquake in Asia

http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/recovery.html

U.S. Department of State: Tsunami Relief

<http://www.state.gov/p/sa/tsunami/>

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID): Earthquake and Tsunami Relief

http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/tsunami/

U.S. Forces Aid Tsunami Relief Efforts in Southeast Asia U.S. Department of Defense

<http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/tsunami/>

U.S. Pacific Command - Tsunami Relief: Special Coverage

<http://www.pacom.mil/special/0412asia/index.shtml>

FirstGov.gov: Asia Earthquakes and Tsunamis

http://www.firstgov.gov/Citizen/Topics/Asia_Tsunamis.shtml

Free Offers : E Journal & Info USA CD ROM

The United States in 2005: Who We Are Today

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/1204/ijse/ijse1204.pdf>

Content:

The American Identity

Who We Are

~ The Changing Face of America

~ Profiles

Remaining United

~ Still E Pluribus Unum? Yes

~ The Immigration Debate

Going Home Again

~ A Valley in California

~ A Town in West Virginia

Glossary

Bibliography

Info USA CD ROM 2004-2005 Edition

Info USA provides extensive hyperlinks to selected sites and resources that provide a rich spectrum of information about the United States

Content:

Fact about the USA

Government and Politics

Major Law and Treaties

Media

Science and Technology

Education in the USA

Society and Values

Art and Culture

Geography and Travel



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DEMOCRACY & HUMAN RIGHTS

1. CORRUPTION AND DEMOCRACY

By James B. Jacobs. *National Forum / Phi Kappa Phi Journal*, Vol. 84, No. 1, Winter 2004, pp. 21-25

Jacobs posits that democracy can succeed even in nations fraught with widespread government corruption. In many societies, there are webs of reciprocal relationships, and distinguishing bribery from favors can be subjective. Anti-corruption charges can be politically motivated, and anti-corruption laws can sometimes cause honest officials to be "overdeterred" and risk-adverse. Jacobs argues that anti-corruption measures should be weighed carefully, and society should be cautious of expanding the definition of corruption. Repeated anti-corruption campaigns have been known to cause the public to lose confidence in their government. Managing corruption is a challenge for every government, every society and every people.

2. THE FAITHFUL

By Corine Hegland; Neil Munro. *National Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 49, December 4, 2004, pp. 3588-3595

The authors explore the identity, political and moral motivations, and worldview of conservative religious groups in the U.S., with a focus on evangelical Christians. The authors point out that conservative Christians see an increasing need to bring their values to the policy-making table--indeed, some see it as an integral part of good government. With various congregations totaling 30 million

members, religious values will play an increasing role in guiding secular decisions. This requires a shift from Church-State separation to one of Church-State "neutrality," explained by the authors as providing a level playing field for all groups--faith-based or not--to have access to government property for meetings and activities. The article points out several defining traits of religious conservatives including an underreported diversity of opinion on topics such as abortion, stem cell research, and school choice. A sidebar gives a historical perspective of the development of evangelicalism in the United States.

3. SWEETHEART DEALS

By Alan Greenblatt. *Governing*, December 2004, pp. 20-25

To save money and increase government efficiency, the public sector increasingly relies on the services and specialized expertise of private companies. Privatization is a "growth industry in all levels of government," writes Greenblatt. But recent high-profile allegations of favoritism and collusion in the awarding of government contracts have prompted closer scrutiny of the government contract process. Greenblatt cites examples of both problems and reform from around the country.

The books, articles, and web sites described in the Article Alert were chosen to represent a diversity of views in order to keep the IRC users abreast of current issues and concerns in the United States. These items represent the views and opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official U.S. Government policy.

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND TRADE

4. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

By Ronald Berenbeim. Vital Speeches of the Day, Vol. 71, No. 3, November 15, 2004, pp. 87-89

Berenbeim, Director of Global Business Ethics Programs, The Conference Board, says the outlook for improved business ethics in governance depends in large measure on understanding institutional and human limitations. He asserts that the lesson of the last decade is that institutional and human vigilance -- regardless of the laws on the books and directors' reputations for honesty and experience -- all but vanishes when markets go through periods of consistent rise. The market -- rather than new laws or special commissions -- is the most effective factor in behavior modification when directors and executives have found it convenient to ignore the limits imposed by sound financial and business practice, he says. However, since the market punishes the guilty and the innocent equally, he proposes several measures to improve corporate governance including greater board involvement in company ethics and requiring companies to insure their financial statements.

5. THE NEW KINGS OF CAPITALISM: A SURVEY OF PRIVATE EQUITY

By Matthew Bishop. Economist, Vol. 373, No. 8403, November 27, 2004, special insert

Private equity has become the new king of capitalism, with many well-known corporate names now owned by private equity firms, such as retailer K-Mart, which recently merged with Sears. Private equity firms are those that purchase other firms or take big stakes in them in order to reshape their businesses, then sell the holdings for a profit. The private equity model is in some ways superior to that of publicly-traded firms as it often seems to provide better corporate governance, says author Matthew Bishop. Additionally, private equity firms are increasingly helping companies maximize their long-term value by protecting them from stock market pressure. Bishop questions whether private equity firms use their power wisely -- growing amounts of pension fund money are being invested in private equity funds and the beneficiaries have the right to know how their savings are being used. The challenge for private equity firms is to meet this legitimate demand without disclosing commercially useful information. The author points out that private equity firms have experienced a wide variance of success. He warns of a danger that perhaps too much money is flowing into private equity, creating a bubble that may result in the funds' losing "edge." If that happens, he writes, capitalism may need to crown a new king.

6. FIGHTING TERROR WITH AID

By Andrew Natsios. Harvard International Review, Vol. 26, No. 3, Fall 2004, pp. 44-48

Natsios, Administrator of USAID, says there are five conditions besides simple poverty that underlie terrorism: isolation, lack of economic opportunity, weak institutions and governance, lack of financial transparency, and poor educational systems. He points out that USAID programs such as road-building projects, special programs for generating employment, capacity building, legislative reform of banking and financial systems, and improving the performance of secular educational systems are designed to combat these conditions.

GLOBAL ISSUES

7. KNOCKING DOWN THE STONEWALL

By Jennifer Dorroh. American Journalism Review, Vol. 26, No. 6, December 2004/January 2005, pp. 48-53

How should media organizations react when faced with charges of plagiarism, bias or other ethical lapses by their reporters? And what is the responsibility of the organizations to the public? The article highlights recent high-profile scandals of major newspapers and television networks, and their varied responses in dealing with crises. The author makes a case for transparency and public disclosure to restore media credibility, as well as clearly defined ethical standards in newsrooms. She also examines internal measures that some media organizations have undertaken to detect ethical warning signs and forestall future problems. Available online at www.ajr.org.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

8. DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY: DEMOCRATIZERS' SURPRISINGLY BRIGHT DEVELOPMENT RECORD

By Joseph Siegle. Harvard International Review, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 2004, pp. 20-25

The author notes that two-thirds of all countries today live under some form of self-governance. He disputes the theory that a developing country must first pay attention to economic growth before it can democratize -- a majority of countries with per-capita incomes below \$1,000 have some form of democratic system. He notes that economic growth in these nations has been realized much faster than that in countries with autocratic systems, where there is lower life expectancy, illiteracy, and sanitation problems. Democratization of some countries has had a more successful developmental outcome, primarily due to institutional accountability, a free press and a system of checks and balances exists between the parties. Most countries that pursue political reform improve economically, but Siegle argues that it is essential to distinguish genuine democracies from those countries whose rulers are simply "going through the motions" and retaining power for themselves.

U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

9. BUSH HAS OWN VIEWS OF PROMOTING CIVIL RIGHTS

By Michelle R. Davis. Education Week, Vol. 24, No. 8, October 20, 2004, pp. 1- 32

President Bush has taken a different view of civil rights than previous administrations, notes Davis. According to Davis, the President has sought to redefine the discussion of civil rights in education by emphasizing the achievement gap between minorities and white students rather than focusing on racial integration in public schools. He has spoken of school choice as a basic right, eased federal restrictions on single-sex public education and has been attentive to discrimination based on faith. Some supporters of the Administration's policies contend the central role of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights has been strengthened in deciding school desegregation cases. On

affirmative action, the Bush Administration staked out a position against the practice, and has gone forward with recommendations on ways schools and colleges could achieve racial and ethnic diversity without relying on preferences in admissions -- despite a Supreme Court ruling that upheld affirmative action while in principle calling for individualized reviews of applicants. The author examines the responses -- both positive and negative -- of civil rights groups to the President's policies.

10. WORLDS APART

By Eric L. Wee. Washington Post Magazine, Education Review Issue, November 7, 2004, pp. 16-22, 32-33

Ovais Ali, a 21-year-old from India's Kashmir region, always dreamed of studying in the United States. America beckoned with a popular

culture that intoxicated him, he says -- but hatred for America swirled around him too. During the summer of 2004 Ali found himself one of a few dozen bright Muslim students from Arab and South Asian countries brought to the United States under a U.S. State Department program. The students lived at an American university, and for five weeks over the summer took classes on U.S. history, politics and society -- and saw everything from soup kitchens and a 4th of July parade to Ellis Island and Ground Zero. The program likely won't change how the students feel about U.S. foreign policy, say the program's sponsors, but they hope giving the students an honest view of the United States and its people might help them become voices of reason at home. The author followed the students during their visit, and recounts their experiences and how their views of the United States were changed.

“The greatest source of America’s generosity is not our government. It’s the good heart of the American people.”
— President George W. Bush —

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